



How to Address the Elephant in the Room: Nadine Dereza's Tips For Conference Facilitating and How to Conduct the Perfect Interview



Nadine Dereza Posted on September 13 2018

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Nadine Dereza is an adept [conference facilitator](#) and a public speaking expert. Co-author of the best-selling book: Insider Secrets of Public speaking, and previously named as '[Financial Journalist](#) of the Year', Nadine regularly works with FTSE 100 companies and is an asset to the business and finance sector. We caught up with Nadine to find out the inside secrets of the facilitator role - including how to address those sticky interview questions, how she started out as a match day commentator, and her number one piece of advice – always check your teeth for spinach!

How did you get into conference facilitating and interviewing?

I took the usual route through radio and television and honed my skills in the studio. Being a big [football](#) fan, I was a match day commentator at Wembley Stadium and was the first female presenter at QPR FC and Spurs FC. That turned out to be something of a trial by fire, but it also prepared me for a lot of what live conferences and interviews can turn out like! TV and radio have been very good for me and taught me the vital lessons - be on time, be prepared and check your teeth for spinach.



Nadine started out as a match day commentator

In your role as an interviewer you have had the opportunity to talk to some of the biggest names in business, how do you ensure controversial issues are addressed and not ignored in your interviews?

I always put the needs of the audience at the forefront of my interviews. If there is an 'elephant in the room', a question that everyone else in the audience wants me to ask, I have to ask it and don't mind doing so. Generally, the person being interviewed knows that asking challenging questions is a part of my job - and often they appreciate having the opportunity to give their side of events. A tough question is a chance for a speaker to address a key issue.

[Business](#) leaders often would prefer to be understood rather than liked, and a difficult line of enquiry gives them a chance to explain themselves. Also, if I don't address the question everyone wants asked, then the audience thinks it's either a 'soft' scripted interview or that I haven't been impartial - which of course is not the

case! Off stage, being polite, friendly but professional is essential, and I think I've got away with some pretty searching questions without stepping over the line.



Nadine will address the 'elephant in the room'

What is the most interesting event you have facilitated and why?

I've been working a lot recently with HS2 chairing their supply chain events across the UK. HS2 combines so many different aspects of what I do - there is a lot of politics, a lot of business, and a lot of money on the table.

You have environmental groups who want the railway - but not the route, local residents, some of whom love the idea, many of whom hate it, businesses who want the opportunities, businesses which feel left out. All of it has to be managed, with

the right people asking the right questions and everyone feeling that they have had their voices heard. It's a challenging brief, and it makes me feel a bit like James Bond: the only missions he really enjoys are the dangerous ones!

What or who has been the greatest influence in your life?

My work has been the greatest influence – it's taken me to see places and meet people that most other people wouldn't ordinarily have had access to. It's had a profound effect on how I have raised my children. Of course, my parents gave me the belief that anything is possible, they gave my brother and I the freedom of thought and opinion - which is ironic because in my work I have to be independent and impartial!



Nadine wants Theresa May to establish herself as a guiding leader

What do you predict will happen to the UK now the country is leaving Europe?

Nobody knows the answer to this question - and that's the problem. Theresa May needs to stamp herself as a firm guiding hand on the tiller. The future could be even more fragmented than the present with disappointed 'Remainers' taking a pessimistic view of every development, and [Brexiters](#) getting frustrated by the slow pace of change. Anyone who voted for Brexit because of immigration is going to find that if we make this country uncomfortable for migrants, it will be a worse place for natives too.

This is not business as usual!

What are your hobbies outside of work?

I spend a lot of my life in front of an audience, so my big indulgence is taking friends to the ballet, theatre or opera. My daughter is a wonderful singer, and I'm a regular at the Royal Opera House and National Theatre so you'd think that would rub off on me, but unfortunately I can't carry a tune in a bucket. I'm happy to leave that to the professionals! I still carry a torch for football, and my 10-year old son, who is destined to be a football commentator, plays for Berko Raiders, which I also sponsor and have agreed to run the line as one of their Assistant Referees. It may sound like a walk in the park but I think it will be my toughest assignment yet!